

For Official Release
PR 001-03082023
Office of the Governor
Utulei, American Samoa
March 08, 2023



Governor Lemanu and First Lady Ella meets with Williams Family



While in Washington, DC for the National Governors Association (NGA) Winter Meeting and the IGIA, Governor Lemanu, First Lady Ella, and a few cabinet members and Governor's staff were hosted in a dinner by the Williams family at their beautiful home in Alexandria, Virginia. Michael Williams, married to Julin of the Mulitauaopele family of Lau'i'i, American Samoa, was the lead counsel and counsel of record to the American Samoa Government in the *Tuaua v. United States* case which was filed in 2012.

Governor Lemanu thanked Michael Williams for his tremendously invaluable assistance on behalf of the people of American Samoa not only on the citizenship matter in the Federal courts, but also in hosting several of the Samoan students from American Samoa who are attending college in the Washington, DC area. He then presented an assemblage of the fua, to'oto'o, tanoa

& ula fala to thank Michael and his family for representing the voice and will of the people of American Samoa in the federal cases. Lemanu also extended Williams an invitation to the American Samoa Flag Day 2023 celebration in April.

Michael expressed that his service is an expression of personal appreciation and love for his family, his wife Julin, and his children who are of Samoan ancestry. Michael added that it is an honor to represent the people of American Samoa and know that his children carry this identity with them.

Background:

The initial case, *Tuaua v. United States*, was filed in 2012 by the Constitutional Accountability Center (CAC), Samoan attorney Charles Alailima, and another law firm representing several Samoan U.S. Nationals including Leneuoti “Lene” Tuaua and the Samoan Federation of America, a non-profit Samoan community organization in the Los Angeles area. This was a landmark litigation through the Federal courts concerning the citizenship status of the people of American Samoa.

Although the American Samoa Government and the late Congressman Faleomavaega Eni Hunkin were not named as defendants in the lawsuit, Faleomavaega who was American Samoa’s representative in the U.S. Congress at the time felt strongly that the outcome of the matter should not be left solely to the opinions of the plaintiffs, their lawyers, and the United States Courts to decide. That the people of American Samoa needed to have a say/voice in the matter. The late Congressman Faleomavaega approached Michael Williams, attorney and partner at the global law firm of Kirkland and Ellis, to help him and the people of American Samoa present their opinion in the Court(s). Michael not only agreed to represent the position of American Samoa but also offered to do it "pro-bono."

The case was first filed with the US District Court of D.C. in 2012, and in 2013, the Judge issued his ruling denying the plaintiffs' claims, hence, the plaintiffs moved their case through the appeals system. In 2015, Congresswoman Uifaatali was first seated in the U.S. Congress and she continued the efforts started by Faleomavaega and Michael Williams on the case. Later in the same year, the U.S. Court of Appeals in D.C. ruled unanimously against the Plaintiffs' claim.

In 2016, the Plaintiffs requested the U.S. Supreme Court to conduct a review of the lower court’s decision - the request was denied.

Michael Williams also represented American Samoa in a similar case, *Fitisemanu v. United States*, on whether persons born in United States territories are entitled to birthright citizenship under the 14th Amendment’s citizenship clause, including whether the Insular Cases should be overruled. Once again, Michael Williams offered to work “pro-bono”.

The two cases were ruled in favor of the United States and the American Samoa Government.

###





Afio mai oe
le Kovana
Sili ma lau
Masiofo.
faiapea
lau au
Taupulega!